

01381

1963/02/04

111. President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board,
James R. Killian, Jr., Chairman, Memorandum
for the President and report, 4 February 1963

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~

February 4, 1963

PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD
MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Attached is the report of your Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board based on our review of the intelligence coverage, assessment and reporting by U. S. intelligence agencies concerning the Soviet military build-up in Cuba during the months preceding October 22, 1962.

Inasmuch as the most urgent recommendations growing out of our review of the Cuba situation have already been submitted to you in the Board's interim report dated December 28, 1962, we are not submitting further recommendations at this time. When the Board next meets we will complete consideration of the comments which have now been received from the Director of Central Intelligence and the U. S. intelligence agencies with respect to the recommendations of our interim report. At that time I anticipate that the Board may wish to present to you additional recommendations on important aspects of our intelligence program.

In undertaking its review the Board requested and received a comprehensive report by the intelligence community. This report, addressed to the Board, is available in the Board's office.

In Annex B to our report we list the principal sources of information considered in our review. We express our deep appreciation of the cooperation and assistance which was freely and promptly given.

While the Board had the benefit of helpful background information, the Board's observations and conclusions are wholly its own.

Respectfully,

FOR THE BOARD

James R. Killian, Jr.
James R. Killian, Jr.
Chairman

Enclosure

~~TOP SECRET~~

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~

PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD

February 4, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Your Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board has completed a review of actions which were taken by the foreign intelligence agencies of our Government to discharge their responsibility for intelligence coverage, assessment and reporting on the Soviet military build-up in Cuba during the months preceding your report to the Nation on October 22, 1962, concerning the USSR's establishment of offensive missile sites in Cuba.

In the course of our review we sought to determine whether there were lessons to be learned from an objective appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the U. S. foreign intelligence effort as disclosed by the Cuba experience. We directed particular attention to those areas of the intelligence process which are concerned with such matters as (1) the acquisition of intelligence, (2) the analysis of intelligence, and (3) the production and dissemination of intelligence reports and estimates in support of national policy formulation and operational requirements.

In our reconstruction of intelligence coverage of Soviet activities on the island of Cuba, it is noted that two principal, consecutive phases were involved. The first phase covered the period prior to October 14, 1962. The second phase consisted of a much briefer period beginning on October 14 and culminating with the Presidential announcement on October 22 concerning measures for meeting the Soviet offensive threat in Cuba. The event, of course, which provided a demarcation of these two phases was the acquisition on October 14 of U-2 photographic evidence that the Soviet Union had taken steps to establish a strategic nuclear missile complex in Cuba.

THE POST-OCTOBER 14 PHASE

We note that the definitive photographic evidence obtained as a result of the October 14 and subsequent overflights of Cuba was promptly processed and submitted to the President in time for

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

decisive action before the Soviet MREM and IRBM systems became fully operational. Beginning with the President's initial receipt of this crucial intelligence there was an effective performance on the part of the U. S. intelligence community in providing the President and his top policy advisers promptly with the coordinated intelligence necessary to enable our Government to respond effectively to the offensive missile threat in Cuba.

We also note that in addition to photographic surveillance other factors contributed substantially to the intelligence success achieved during this period. They were (1) the skillful analysis of the data produced by photographic interpreters,

[REDACTED] and (3) the use of intelligence previously obtained concerning strategic missile and air defense installations within the Soviet Union in determining the nature and extent of similar capabilities in Cuba.

In pointing to the high performance which was achieved by our foreign intelligence agencies during the post-October 14 period, we recognize that it would be difficult for the intelligence community to operate with the same intensity and efficiency under less critical conditions. Thus one of our major problems remains the achievement of very high performance between crises.

THE PRE-OCTOBER 14 PHASE

As to the pre-October 14 period, we conclude that our foreign intelligence effort should have been more effective in (1) obtaining adequate and timely intelligence as to the nature and scope of the Soviet military build-up as it developed over a period of months, and (2) exploiting the available intelligence as a basis for estimating Soviet and Cuban plans and intentions.

In view of the fact that the Soviet move came dangerously close to success in an area less than ninety miles from our shores, the absence of useful early warning of the enemy's intention must be stressed. We did not find that during this period there was within the intelligence community the focused sense of urgency or alarm which might well have stimulated a greater effort.

Intelligence Acquisition

In the intelligence collection area the most significant deficiencies involved (1) clandestine agent coverage, and (2) aerial photographic surveillance.

~~TOP SECRET~~

TOP SECRET

Clandestine agent coverage within Cuba was inadequate. Although the limited agent assets of the Central Intelligence Agency and of Army Intelligence did produce some valuable reports on developments in Cuba, we believe that the absence of more effective clandestine agent coverage, as an essential adjunct to other intelligence collection operations, contributed substantially to the inability of our Government to recognize at an earlier date the danger of the Soviet move in Cuba. It would appear that over the years there has been a lack of foresight in the long-term planning for the installation of these agents.

We find also that full use was not made of aerial photographic surveillance, particularly during September and October when the influx of Soviet military personnel and armaments had reached major proportions. We recognize that in September inclement weather delayed some of the scheduled U-2 missions. However, we note that from September 8 to September 16 U-2 missions over Cuba were suspended apparently because of the loss of a Chinese Nationalist U-2 over the China mainland on September 8. We also note with concern that during the period of increasing emergency, as pointed up by intelligence indicators, there was not a corresponding intensification of the scheduling of U-2 missions over the island.

With regard to proposals for aerial photographic surveillance of Cuba, we make the following additional observations:

(1) The President granted authorization for all U-2 flights which were recommended to him by his policy advisers on the Special Group having responsibility for such matters.

(2) The Special Group approved, in one instance with modifications, all U-2 overflights recommended to it. (We surmise that on its own the Special Group could have initiated overflight recommendations.)

(3) Until October 3, when the Defense Intelligence Agency urged that suspicious areas of Cuba be covered by U-2 photographic missions, it appears that there was a failure on the part of the intelligence community as a whole to propose to the Special Group U-2 reconnaissance missions on a scale commensurate with the nature and intensity of the Soviet activity in Cuba. The need for more frequent and extensive aerial photographic surveillance during the summer and fall was even more pressing in view of the inadequacy of clandestine agent resources and the limited effectiveness of

TOP SECRET

~~TOP SECRET~~

other collection methods such as legal traveler, third country diplomat, refugee interrogation, and signals intelligence coverage.

(4) Although we were unable to establish the existence of a policy which prevented overflying areas of Cuba where surface-to-air missile installations were present, the Central Intelligence Agency and others believed that such a restriction did in fact prevail. We note in this regard that in the December 26 report of the Director of Central Intelligence it is stated that although the paucity of records makes it impossible to determine whether or not there was such a restriction, it is nevertheless clear that operational elements were under the impression that such an injunction was in effect.

(5) Apparently the Special Group was not made fully aware of the delaying effects on the acquisition of aerial intelligence which could and did result from changes in a CIA proposal for the conduct of a U-2 mission. On September 10 the CIA proposed that the Special Group approve and recommend the scheduling of a U-2 flight to provide extensive peripheral coverage of Cuba as well as two legs directly over Cuban air space. The Secretary of State objected to this combining of an actual overflight with the overflying of international waters. He felt that the long peripheral flight would draw attention, and if the aircraft were to fall into enemy hands after an overflight of Cuba, this would put the United States in a poor position to stand on its rights to overfly international waters. Accordingly, the Secretary of State proposed that the September flights be broken into four separate missions, two of them peripheral and two directly over Cuba, and the CIA made plans to do so. However, CIA made it an operational practice not to overfly if there was more than 25 per cent overcast, and the Director of Central Intelligence points out in his December 26 report that the poor weather in September plus the necessity for flying four separate missions instead of one resulted in prolonging the time required to get the desired coverage of Cuba. In fact, the next successful U-2 mission was not flown until September 26. We feel that under these circumstances the Special Group should have been informed of the factors operating to delay the four-flight coverage, and given an opportunity to reconsider the advisability of a mission over the critical target areas urgently requiring surveillance. We also feel that the Special Group should be possessed of a mechanism which would automatically pick up such omissions of reporting.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

(6) It appears that within the Special Group further consideration should have been given to proposals by the Acting Director of Central Intelligence in August and September for low-level photographic reconnaissance of certain targets in Cuba. When the Special Group took up the matter on September 14, note was taken that the Secretary of Defense did not wish the low-level operations to be considered until results of U-2 coverage of the same area became available. Granting the obvious appropriateness of the recommendation of the Secretary of Defense, we must point out that when the U-2 flights were delayed there should have been immediate re-examination of the proposal for low-level flights. (No low-level reconnaissance missions were flown over Cuba until October 23.)

Intelligence Analysis

We find the need for improvement of the processes used in making national intelligence estimates and the processes used in making current intelligence analyses, and also in the techniques for relating these two functions.

The President and policy-advisory officials were ill served by the Special National Intelligence Estimate issued by the intelligence community on September 19, on "The Military Buildup in Cuba." This estimate concluded that the establishment of Soviet medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba would be inconsistent with Soviet practices to date and with Soviet policy as the community then assessed it. This mistaken judgment, made at the very time when the Soviets were installing MRBMs and IRBMs in Cuba, we attribute to (1) the lack of adequate intelligence coverage of Cuba, (2) the rigor with which the view was held that the Soviet Union would not assume the risks entailed in establishing nuclear striking forces on Cuban soil, and (3) the absence of an imaginative appraisal of the intelligence indicators which, although limited in number, were contained in reports disseminated by our intelligence agencies. (We reach this conclusion even though we recognize the absence at the time of any conclusive photographic intelligence.)

The Estimate of September 19 pointed away from the likelihood of the establishment of Soviet nuclear missile systems in Cuba. An important cautionary statement appeared in a discussion paragraph, namely, that the contingency of such a development should be examined carefully, even though it would run counter to current Soviet policy. This cautionary statement, however, was not carried forward into the conclusions of the Estimate.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

We believe that since this statement was of momentous significance and was in direct contradiction to the Estimate's principal finding, it should have been highlighted so as to alert policy makers and intensify the intelligence collection efforts of the agencies involved.

Turning to another important aspect of the intelligence assessment function, we find that in the analysis of intelligence indicators and in the production of current intelligence reports, the intelligence community failed to get across to key Government officials the most accurate possible picture of what the Soviets might be up to in Cuba, during the months preceding October 14. The importance of this conclusion is not diminished by the fact that hindsight is easier to apply than foresight in determining the significance of particular indicators included in the mass of reports available for intelligence analysis.

We believe that the near-total intelligence surprise experienced by the United States with respect to the introduction and deployment of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba resulted in large part from a malfunction of the analytic process by which intelligence indicators are assessed and reported. This malfunction diminished the effectiveness of policy advisers, national intelligence estimators, and civilian and military officers having command responsibilities.

We believe that the manner in which intelligence indicators were handled in the Cuba situation may well be the most serious flaw in our intelligence system, and one which, if uncorrected, could lead to the gravest consequences. In this instance, the major consequences were the following:

(1) Our Government was not provided with the degree of early warning of hostile intentions and capabilities which should have been derived from the indicators contained in the incoming intelligence.

(2) Neither you nor your principal policy advisers were provided at appropriate intervals with meaningful, cumulative assessments of the available intelligence indicators. Had the intelligence community systematically prepared and periodically presented compilations of accumulated indicators, this would have permitted appropriate policy-level consideration of developments in Cuba and of alternative courses of action as required. The practice followed in the Cuba situation of providing White House

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

staff members with some of the raw indicator reports was not an acceptable substitute for professional analytical reporting on a developing crisis situation, while raw intelligence reports were used effectively in targeting the October 14 U-2 mission which led to the discovery of offensive missiles in Cuba, the significance of the important indicators involved was not communicated to the President.

(3) Despite the intelligence indicators which were accumulating even before the U-2 discovery on October 14, the intelligence community did not produce for the benefit of policy-level consumers a revision of its erroneous National Intelligence Estimate of September 19.

We believe a further and exhaustive examination, not limited to Cuba, should be made by the intelligence community of the complex analytic process employed throughout the community in the assessment of intelligence indicators. We base this belief on the nature of the indicator-type data which our review discloses was available during the period from May to October 1962.

Thirty five examples of such available indicators are set forth in Annex A to this report. In cataloging such examples we appreciate fully that we have the benefit of a perspective which was not then possessed by the intelligence community. We are also aware that the illustrations listed are but a small number taken from the great volume of reports which were received and which included some demonstrably erroneous information. We urge that the annexed illustrations be read not only for their individual content but also for the purpose of noting the cumulative significance of the information being received. These indicators were acquired from a variety of intelligence sources, such as [redacted] refugees, clandestine agents, and friendly foreign diplomats. They dealt with various aspects of the Soviet military build-up in Cuba, including the introduction of high-ranking Soviet military personalities who were specialists in the fields of military construction, engineering, electronics, jet pilot training, surface-to-air missile defenses, and Soviet long-range air and strategic striking forces; the assignment to Cuba of Soviet specialists in rocketry and atomic arms; the statements made by persons highly placed in the Castro regime concerning expectations that a nuclear delivery capability would be established in Cuba; the sightings by ground observers of offensive missiles being deployed under strict Soviet control

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

and under conditions of great secrecy; and the introduction on a progressively increasing scale of Soviet troops, arms, and military equipment and materiel in large volume and, in a number of instances, under strict security conditions. (On the latter subject we note from other materials which we have reviewed that the number of Soviet Bloc ships arriving in Cuba increased from an average of 30 a month in the first seven months of 1962 to a peak of 67 arrivals in September.)

Intelligence Reporting

Our review of the intelligence reporting process reveals that limitations which were placed on the publication and dissemination of reports and information concerning the situation in Cuba were either misinterpreted or misapplied. This inhibited the flow of significant data.

One such limitation was imposed by the Director of Central Intelligence in May 1962. Because of the Director's reservations concerning estimates on Cuban order of battle, he instructed CIA analysts to check out with the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) any report that was susceptible of photographic verification. The purpose was to establish by all available means the authenticity of refugee and agent reports. However, according to the Director of Central Intelligence, it operated as a limitation on publication because the instruction was interpreted by CIA analysts as a restriction against publishing anything that could not be verified by the NPIC. One consequence was that during the pre-October 14 period as information became available on the offensive build-up in Cuba, it was not published by the CIA even in the President's Intelligence Checklist.

On August 31 another limitation was imposed. The President placed limitations on the publication of reports on weapons which might be offensive, pending receipt of further information concerning a suspected missile installation at Banes. On October 9 these instructions were reiterated by the President who emphasized the importance of maintaining the tightest possible control of all information relating to offensive weapons.

The President made clear that he wished to impose no limitation whatever on the collection and analysis of intelligence relating to offensive weapons and he emphasized that he wanted all such information collected, analyzed, and promptly reported to officials having a real need to know. However, the United

~~TOP SECRET~~

TOP SECRET

States Intelligence Board interpreted the Presidential instructions as an injunction not to print any information on offensive weapons in Cuba in any intelligence publication. Although the Director of Central Intelligence exempted CIA's Presidential Intelligence Checklist from this injunction, the Checklist issues prepared subsequent to the President's instructions failed to include information from any of the refugee or agent reports on the sightings of offensive missiles in Cuba.

The President's directive restricting the publication of intelligence on offensive weapons was clearly wise, necessary, and essential to the national interest. The misinterpretations of this directive endangered the necessary flow of information and serve as a warning that in future situations requiring such restrictions attention must be given to establishing secure channels for transmission of vital information to officials having a clear need to know.

Emergency Planning

The Cuba experience points up the need for advance planning to ensure that our human and material intelligence resources are sufficient, and are adequately organized, to meet the demands of an emergency such as that which confronted our Government in this instance.

When the President found it necessary to restrict the publication of information on offensive missiles in Cuba and to confine such information to designated categories of recipients, the intelligence community did not have in readiness a plan to meet the reporting requirements of such an emergency. As a result, significant information did not reach some elements of the Government, both in Washington and the military commands, and in some instances important intelligence was not brought to the attention of the President and some other high officials. Two examples of the consequences which followed were (1) officials who checked in normal places concerning such matters as the October 10 speech of Senator Keating were told that there was no evidence of offensive weapons, although in fact raw intelligence had already led to the targeting of the San Cristobal area where offensive missile installations were subsequently found through U-2 photography on October 14, and (2) for a brief period the limitation on publication operated in such fashion as to preclude the Defense Intelligence Agency from disseminating outside the Washington area intelligence publications on the developing Cuba situation. As a consequence, it was necessary to call in certain military commanders from the field

TOP SECRET

~~TOP SECRET~~

and give them oral briefings on the subject. The restriction served to hamper the commanders in their planning for possible military action involving Cuba.

We note next that when U-2 overflights of Cuba began on an accelerated basis on October 14, no more than a 10-day supply of photographic film was on hand in the entire country to meet the demands resulting from the sudden step-up of aerial reconnaissance operations. Moreover, in the absence of a central processing facility for developing photographic film in quantity, under appropriate security safeguards, it was necessary to make use of film laboratories at scattered locations considerably removed from Washington.

* * *

Throughout our review, we have been mindful of public charges to the effect that during the period of the Soviet military build-up in Cuba, the U. S. intelligence process was in some manner manipulated for partisan political purposes. We find no evidence whatsoever to support such charges.

James R. Killian, Jr.

James R. Killian, Jr., Chairman
President's Foreign Intelligence
Advisory Board

William O. Baker, Member
Clark Clifford "
James Doolittle "
Gordon Gray "
Edwin H. Land "
William L. Langer "
Robert D. Murphy "
Frank Pace, Jr. "

~~TOP SECRET~~